

# JUDGE GRASON DIES AT 71 AT NURSING HOME

Member Of Bench And  
Bar For 48 Years, He  
Retired 2 Years Ago

Former Judge C. Gus Grason, member of the Maryland judiciary for 25 years and of a family linked with the bench and bar of the State for more than a century, died yesterday in a Lutherville nursing home after a long illness. He was 71.

Judge Grason, who began the practice of law 48 years ago, was a member of the Maryland Court of Appeals until his retirement in November of 1951. Before taking his place on the appellate court he had served first as associate and later as chief judge of the Third Judicial Circuit, presiding in Baltimore and Harford counties.

## Health Gradually Failed

Automatically retired when he reached the age of 70, Judge Grason experienced gradually failing health until a stroke precipitated his last illness early this month.

He had lived for 42 years in the same home at 213 Bosley avenue, in Towson.

A great-grandson of William Grason, governor of Maryland from 1838 to 1841, Judge Grason was the grandson of the late Richard Grason, also a former chief judge of the 3d Judicial Circuit, and the son of the late John Grason, former State's attorney for Baltimore. His mother was the late Ida May Brown Grason.

## Defended Socolow

Before he first put on the black robes of the judiciary in 1926, "Gus" Grason had brought fire and drama into his successful practice as a trial lawyer, some of his most effective work having been in the role of defense attorney.

Endowed with a wit which could be acid and which later was to seem especially formidable to young lawyers presenting cases before him, Grason the counselor used it as a telling weapon of oratory and debate.

Perhaps the most famous of the many cases in which he was defense counsel was the trial of Walter Socolow, a defendant in the slaying of William B. Norris in 1922.

Even with the mellowing of the years and the accumulation of judicial experience, Judge Grason re-

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1942 photo

**JUDGE C. GUS GRASON**

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maintained incisive in his comments on and off the bench.

In the month before his retirement he was describing the reorganization of the Court of Appeals under the Bond plan as "a great mistake" and was maintaining that "if I had it all to do over again I would stay off the bench."

**Judge Grason** said he voted against the constitutional amendment which altered the appellate court's organization but was unable to speak out against it because of his official position.

#### **Cites Benefit To City**

His retirement imminent, the jurist was more outspoken.

"I don't think it is going to work," he said of the Bond plan. "It was a great mistake except to give Baltimore city more than one judge."

Born on Dulaney Valley road in Towson, **Judge Grason** lived all his life in the Baltimore county seat. He received his early schooling there and later graduated from the University of Maryland Law School.

He made his initial bid for public office as a candidate for State's attorney in Baltimore county in 1919, but was defeated by H. Courtenay Jenifer, now a member of the Maryland Racing Commission.

#### **Reappointed By O'Connor**

Seven years later, seasoned by extensive practice at the bar, he won election as associate judge of the 3rd Judicial District for a fifteen-year-term. With one year to go before the 1942 election, he was reappointed in November, 1941, by Herbert R. O'Connor, then Governor of Maryland.

In 1942, Governor O'Connor named him chief judge of the circuit, succeeding the late Judge T. Scott Offutt, who retired that year.

Under the system in effect before the Bond Plan reorganization went into effect in 1945, elevation to the chief judgeship in the Circuit Court automatically made Judge Grason a member of the Court of Appeals.

#### **Student Of Civil War**

Although the reorganization changed the makeup of the appellate courts, all judges sitting at the time of its adoption retained their places on the bench of the State's highest tribunal.

An insatiable reader, **Judge Grason** collected a fine legal and historical library in his Towson home.

He was a student of every phase of the Civil War, tireless in his reading on the subject and in his exploration of the battlefields in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

His allegiance to the cause of the South never wavered, and a portrait of Gen. Robert E. Lee was always on his desk.

#### **Funeral On Sunday**

Funeral services will be held at 3 P.M. Sunday in Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church in Towson, with burial in Prospect Hill cemetery.

Survivors are his wife, Mrs. Muriel Skipwith Powers Grason, three children, two brothers, two sisters, and four grandchildren.

The children are Powers and Richard Grason and Mrs. Lelia Lyons. James and Hillen Grason are the brothers. The sisters are Mrs. Henry Wainright and Mrs. Bruce Raynolds.